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Biden Thanks Lawmakers for Enacting a Series of Laws to Help Make Delaware Safe and Stronger

Dover – Attorney General Beau Biden thanked lawmakers today for passing a series of legislative proposals developed by his office that strengthen laws to punish a wide array of criminals, protect at-risk Delawareans from harm, hold chronic polluters accountable and protect consumers. After the close of this year's General Assembly session yesterday, a variety of bills put forth by the Attorney General's Office this session are either on their way to Governor Jack Markell's desk for signature, or have been recently enacted.

"I am grateful to the members of the General Assembly for enhancing our tools to fight crime, safeguard our environment, and ensure that Delaware's homeowners and consumers are treated fairly," Attorney General Biden said.

Fighting Crime

- HB 168 imposes harsher mandatory-minimum prison sentences on repeat DUI offenders.
- SB 65 strengthens the office's ability to fight crime by expanding its ability to clean up properties where drug, gun, and gang crime poison our communities.
- HB 19 modernizes Delaware's drug laws to more effectively punish criminals and deter future offenses by increasing penalties for drug dealers and recognizing the dangers of illegal prescription drug abuse.

"We're using creating ways of fighting crime not only by increasing penalties for dangerous criminals, but also by expanding our use of creative crime-fighting tools including holding property owners accountable for allowing their properties to be safe havens for drug, gun, and vice crime," Biden said.

Protecting the Vulnerable

- HB 63 makes it clear that adults who are patients or residents in group homes and treatment facilities can never consent to sexual crimes committed against them. Perpetrators of sexual assault in treatment facilities now face increased jail time.

- SB 28 created the state's Address Confidentiality Program, which allows victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking, and others to secure a substitute PO Box address in order to remain hidden from their attackers or others who could locate them through a public records' search.
- SB 133 expands the Victims' Compensation Assistance Program by providing financial compensation to innocent victims for an additional range of crimes.

"We have a responsibility to help those who need it the most and give our voices to the voiceless. These changes to the law will do so by providing powerful protections to vulnerable Delawareans, and giving crime victims tools and resources to rebuild their lives," said Biden.

Safeguarding the Environment

- SB 92 enhances penalties for those who pollute Delaware's air, water, and soil. Now, those chronic polluters who show no willingness to reduce emissions from their facilities or appear to view environmental penalties as merely a cost of doing business face a potential maximum penalty of \$10,000 per illegal emission per day.

"This important legislation safeguards Delaware's natural resources and protects public health and safety by providing strong motivation for polluters to clean up their operations and follow the law or face tougher consequences. Paying a fine should not be a cost of doing business, now there will be consequences," Biden said.

Standing Up for Consumers

- A package of bi-partisan legislation responds to Delaware's foreclosure crisis:
 - HB 58 creates an automatic mediation program when a complaint for foreclosure is filed.
 - HS 1 for HB 57 requires lenders to give borrowers notice of foreclosure and provide opportunities for assistance and loss mitigation.
 - SB 42 provides for registration and bonding of mortgage modification companies and includes additional consumer protections such as prohibiting up-front fees.
 - HB 59 creates an Office in the Attorney General's Fraud and Consumer Protection Division to manage foreclosure related programs.
 - SB 48 treats the filing of a false document in a foreclosure as a deceptive trade practice, with associated consequences.
- HS 1 for HB 88 gives the Attorney General's Office greater ability to help Delawareans who are victims of investment scams and closes loopholes that have allowed certain investment dealers to operate outside the scrutiny of the law.

"We're protecting Delaware's families by guaranteeing that homeowners facing foreclosure have the opportunity to sit down face-to-face with their lender to have a meaningful conversation about their mortgage and we're ensuring that borrowers and lenders both play by the same rules," Biden said.

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